

Chapter and Affinity Groups Presidents Conference

Thursday, 3 November 2022

8:00AM – 4:00PM

Dallas, TX

Gen Mike Gould, CEO AOG and Foundation

Where we are today:

- Three board meetings in late October (AOG, Foundation, Falcon Foundation) – all wanted a DEI update from Gen Clark
- Gen Clark put in perspective (news tries to generate headlines)
 - o What was reported on the news is not what is happening
 - o The slide was a tool as part of team building – build teams in increasingly diverse settings
 - o Build leaders of character
 - o “Mom and Dad” statement was about recognizing differences, awareness of situations
 - o 16 hours total in academic career
 - o Cadets are not concerned with these headlines
- Gen Clark wrote a letter to the graduate community
- It is our job to support the Academy
- We are helping the Academy move past this
 - o 60 Minutes type interview
 - DEI
 - Leaders of Character
 - IFC and other important programs
 - o December Checkpoints will have letters written by Distinguished Graduates
 - o This group can share as those become available

Where we are headed:

- Survey found:
 - o We need to be present in the lives of graduates
 - o We need to be relevant in the lives of graduates (programs and services)
 - o We need to get younger
- The joint vision, mission, and strategic plan were presented to the AOG and Foundation boards
- Strategic priorities:
 - o Engagement
 - o Philanthropy
 - o Stewardship
 - o Communication
 - o Organizational Excellence
- Early wins – on the right path
 - o Membership for all grads
 - o Capturing cadets when the graduate

- Special Status is likely to pass
 - Academy would be able to endorse supporting organizations
 - Would let us connect with cadets more before they graduate
- Reunions: 2022 1 in Dayton, 11 at Academy (5,500 participants)
 - Improved access to Academy
 - Check presentations for class giving
- Campaign: Defining out Future
 - Two years left in \$270M campaign
 - Almost 90% of the way there
 - Get grads to participate (Cyber, Stadium, IFC, P-51, Visitor Center, and other projects)
 - 1Day1USAFA – day of giving

Q&A:

- Are we not providing automatic membership?
 - Individuals must opt in
- Endorsement (referring to Special Status), how are bases affected by this change?
 - This is specifically for service academies, but chapters and affinity groups are part of our organization, so may be able to incorporate ways to work with bases; we tried not to overreach in our proposal
- Is it possible for the AOG to share the database with local chapters?
 - There is a process for this – a member first must agree that we can share that information upon request (some do not want their information shared) and for those who have information we may release, you may request the information through our website as often as you would like
- Is there a hotel update?
 - Hotel is being built; Visitor Center cornerstone laying is complete – both will be done by 2024
 - The property is on an enhanced use lease – it is on Academy property (outside of secure area), this will eventually be gifted to us
 - Visitors will have the option to be vetted and take a bus around the Academy from the visitor center

Naviere Walkewicz, SVP Alumni Relations

2022 had two key launches:

- Membership for All (MAG)
 - Started on 3 January 2022 with 59% membership
 - As of 1 November: 8% growth, we now have 34,582 graduates who are members (of a little over 51,000 total graduates)
 - Processes in place for the Class of 2026 and beyond
- Graduate Survey
 - Conducted in March 2022
 - 8,800 participants
 - All grads were able to participate (not just members)

- “Pride in our Academy” was the focal point, survey takers self-aligned into one of six personas
- Results of the survey were released in August

What’s next:

- MAG:
 - We are inviting people to join at every opportunity (for example – Webguy provided a teaser from reunions, opt in to see full materials)
 - Goal of 5% growth every year until we reach 85% membership
 - Reinvigorating membership benefits
 - Continuing a culture of gratitude for our legacy members
 - Question: how does the AOG make money with membership dues?
 - Parents and families continue to have paid membership, sponsorships, partnership with Foundation
 - Question: what about non-grad alumni?
 - Non-grad alumni are still able to purchase their membership
- Survey:
 - The team is strategic planning for 2023 and beyond
 - Conducting an alumni and legacy class program audit and review
 - Key finding #1: all grad demographics fit into one of the six personas
 - Key finding #2: there are vital windows of time to affect pride (connect with cadets and young grads, cannot wait 10+ years to engage)
 - Key finding #3: grads shared how they want to connect
 - Mentorship (cadets and grads)
 - Connection (grads in my area)
 - Networking (leverage opportunities with grads)
 - Help struggling cadets (cadets struggling with life at the Academy)
- Making changes to pave the way for success:
 - Alumni team has been redefined:
 - Join (membership and sponsorship)
 - Connect (alumni programs)
 - Engage (alumni engagement)
 - Utilize the power of our distributed groups (chapters, affinity groups, CAS, etc.)
 - USAFA Portal
 - Signature engagement opportunities
 - Firstie Departure and young alum mini reunion (years 1 – 5)
 - Long Blue Line Weekend
 - Reunions

Q&A & Discussion:

- The dip of pride post-graduation – the Air Force is part of the issue
 - Those who did not serve 20 years are treated like any other visitor to the Academy
 - Need support from the 10th AF Wing



- The alumni badge does not provide access to the Cadet Area (the AOG can provide tours through the office, which can include Cadet Area)
- The AOG will continue to work on this

Karina Ross, Senior Director Alumni Engagement

Engagement priorities:

- Engagement opportunities:
 - Portal launch – January 2023; will start with chapter and affinity groups
 - Volunteer month in April – mentorship opportunities will be a priority
 - Care calls – to new grads
 - Founders Day – history and heritage – meet the community where it is at
 - Long Blue Line Weekend – will be in July or August; whole weekend of events for graduates to engage, connect, celebrate
 - March Back
 - Chapter and Affinity Group Conference
 - Bookend reunions (61+ years, 1 – 5 years)
 - Entrepreneur event – 2023 will focus on wine/distillery business
 - Entrepreneurship month – November; partner with other service academies for an event
 - Comment from the group: get calendar details out to chapter and affinity presidents, class scribes, senators, etc. as soon as possible to push out to their communities
- Portal:
 - ZoomieLink competed with LinkedIn, was not a value add
 - This portal will be a central hub for community, alumni, cadets, faculty, staff
 - Expanded services and features to connect, learn, and create
 - USAFA Portal groups (can create and own groups)
 - Exclusive resources
 - Expand and track membership
 - Communication/email blasts
 - Events
 - Structured to support mentorship
 - Mobile app will be coming

Q&A:

- Can we push athletic calendar into the portal?
- What goes from AOG website to this portal?
- Can we add people to the portal?
- ZoomieLink – will people automatically be moved from ZoomieLink into the new portal?
 - Yes

Angelica Schumacher, Young Alumni Program Manager

Where we are heading with young alumni:

- Portal will focus on young alumni – Spring of 2023
- Reach them while they are still cadets
- Firstie Departure – connect with recent grads to ask questions, get advice
- Reunion for grads 1 – 5 years out
 - o Will provide resources and information for career transitions
- Young alumni ambassadors
- Mentorship program (by 2024)
- Awards program (to include Space Force)
- Revitalize CAS

Q&A & Discussion:

- How to leverage award winners?
 - o They will be ambassadors
- How far along are we in this process?
 - o We are identifying and engaging now; will have working groups with chapters and affinity groups
- Need to get 3 Degrees involved in the reunions with younger grads
- Academy leadership needs to be leveraged – seeing and receiving the good and bad from grads

Group Presentations

How do we help educate the LBL on the role of the AOG/Foundation and the impact we make with their help?

- Leverage grassroots approach (chapter and affinity leadership) – trusted sources such as presidents and scribes; message is from AOG but delivered by these leaders
- Personalize messages – distinct groups
- Succinct messaging
- Include scribes in conference
- Hold people accountable – as chapter/affinity president, connect with your group
- Critical and advance notification (in both directions: receive from and collect for AOG)
- Real life impact stories
- Re-baseline the grad community on what the AOG does
- Be proactive – get information out about what the AOG is doing
- Quick, timely updates (Checkpoints)
- First year – get printed Checkpoints – subscribe for continued print copies
- Fundraising events – buy and name a seat at the stadium, bricks, etc.
- Bring AOG presence to chapter events
- Personalize experiences, share the passion
- Text platform to get the word out
- Hit cadets early and often
- Funding source for chapter and affinity groups – AOG cover half expenses?



- Reverse mentoring
- Family friendly reunions (personalize)
- Five year reunion, expand affinity groups to cover all cadet clubs

How do we bring grads back to their association with Membership for All Graduates?

- What ties you to the Academy? Clubs, etc. – cold call from someone with shared interests
- Show the value (considering where you are in life)
- Be able to meet with cadets
- Reach out to disenfranchised
- Give a platform to voice concerns/issues; encourage feedback – how we can or have made change
- Use short clips
- Publicize affinity groups
- Leverage groups to invite nonmembers
- Give a gift for joining (what's in it for me?)
- Non-chapter contact information – provide for direct outreach
- Popup – join AOG (like the cookies notification on a website)
- Share all the good things happening; tell war stories
- Bring AOG staff to chapters
- Devote the most time on the Inwardly Proud group
- Willingness to have forums to have tough conversations
- Share the AOG's success stories
- Mobile app

Grad engagement and event attendance

- Size the number of activities to what makes sense
- Themed activities, tie into what is going on in the area already
- Geographical chapter reps
- Gather around new or different experiences
- Take advantage of network for “celebrity” grad involvement
- Nonactive-duty grads to build the core of the chapter (more likely to stick around)
- Involve cadets when able
- Events at AF bases
- Target specific demographics
- Tailor events to families, locations that would be of interest
- Chapters mentoring chapters
- Encourage feedback
- Get locations of games out in advance (chapters to get word out; AOG to help sponsor?)
- NCLS – actively advertised?
- Local businesses to sponsor events
- Fireside chat with entrepreneurs

Young Alumni participation in chapter

- Team leadership with young alum
- Social media led by young alum
- Local sporting events – advertise at bases
- Tie into giving back
- Young alumni award – chapters should endorse/nominate
- Pull rosters at graduation – host new to area grad events
- Consistent events “Thirsty Third Thursday” happy hour
- Leverage CGOC network
- AOG conduct young alumni panel
- Survey at Firstie Departure – things of interest
- Active-duty liaison to local chapter
- Identify senior graduate on installation
- Make it clear what the AOG provides

Recruiting new chapter leadership and positions

- Add position to lead into leadership (such as Vice)
- Build expectations around giving back
- Incentivize leadership positions – tickets to games/events
- Provide resources, feedback
- Model for chapter size, region (AOG frame where needed)
- Appoint positions for specific tasks
- Send young alumni to chapter conference
- Involve chapters in Firstie Departure, Taste of Home, etc.

Mark Hille, President AOG and Foundation

Takeaways:

- Review, prioritize, provide follow up
 - o A lot of experience and commitment in this room (and our other volunteers)
 - o Clear how critical these efforts are
 - o Feeling of purposefulness for bringing in the next generation